

### Ravelli reveals in goal

SAN FRANCISCO, July 9: They always say you have to be a bit mad to be a goalkeeper and Thomas Ravelli seems to fit the bill perfectly, reports AFP.

His wild, staring eyes, flailing arms and screaming insults when he feels his defence isn't doing its job mark him out in a mild-mannered Swedish side.

However, he said he would not have given Pontus Kamark such an appalling dressing-down during the second-round game against Saudi Arabia if he did not know the player.

"The game was so intense and my behaviour was so intense and I yelled at Kamark because I was not happy with him. I need to have intensity to play well," Ravelli said Friday.

"But Kamark knows me and he didn't take it personally."

Ravelli added to his eccentric image at the end of the match when he fell flat on his back alone in his goal-mouth and stared into space.

"I was really tired after the game. It was so hot and I was just mentally and physically exhausted," he explained.

And he was unhappy with his wild-man reputation.

"I'm just very competitive. I'm totally committed to my job and I want to show everyone I am in full command of my area. Besides, I cannot stand losing," he said.

Though Ravelli was certain Kamark was not upset game, some Swedish players have in the past claimed he deliberately provokes them.

And although he equals the Swedish record of 115 caps in the quarter-final against Romania at Stanford Stadium on Sunday he has never received an offer to play abroad.

Ravelli, 34, equals the record set by central defender Bjorn Nordqvist, who played in the 1978 World Cup.

He took over the keeper's jersey from Ronnie Hellstrom in 1981 and if he plays for the next two years he expects to beat the 125 cap world record of English keeper Peter Shilton.

But he said when he made 100 in a friendly against Switzerland in August last year, he never thought he would make 115.

"But I'm very happy about all those caps," he added.

Since the World Cup final against Pele's Brazil on home soil in 1958, Sweden have not made a great impact on international football till reaching the European Championships semi-finals two years ago.

Ravelli explained their improvement: "I think we used to win the friendlies and lose the big games. But now we have mental strength."

He should know.



Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp juggles with the ball during the team's training session at Southern Methodist University in Dallas on July 8. — AFP photo

**Swedish duo rated better than Brazil's**

SAN FRANCISCO, July 9: Brazilian forwards Romario and Bebeto are better technically, but Sweden strikers, Martin Dahlin and Kennet Andersson, are scoring more goals, Swedish skipper Jonas Thern said Friday, reports AFP.

The Brazil attacking tandem may be all the rage at the World Cup, but Dahlin and Andersson have formed the most prolific scoring duo with seven of Sweden's tournament-high nine goals.

Dahlin's four goals, three from headers, rank him third in the tournament behind Russia's Oleg Salenko and combined with three-time scorer Andersson, the Swedish frontline has outscored all other strike partnerships, along with Spain.

In contrast, Romario has netted three times while Bebeto has scored twice in Brazil's tally of seven goals.

"Romario and Bebeto may be technically better than Kennet and Martin," said Napoli-based Thern. "But that's not always the most important thing for the team."

Dahlin and tall target man Andersson will be hunting for more goals in Sunday's quarter-final against Romania here.

Sweden were runners-up when they staged the World Cup in 1958. This is the first time the Swedes have subsequently reached the last eight.

"I think Romania will play very defensively and then counter attack," said Dahlin Friday. "They have a very quick player in Hagl."

"I expect it to be a tough game, but we are in the quarter-finals now and anything can happen."

Dahlin said Sweden had exceeded public and media expectations at home by reaching the second round to wipe out the bitter memories of losing all three group matches at the 1990 World Cup.

"Now we have to put the pressure on ourselves," he said. "We are not satisfied at all. We want to win as many games as possible and go as far as possible at this World Cup."

**A European harp played by Latin breeze**

MORAGA, Calif. July 9: Pele is still his biggest idol. And he remembers watching Mario Kempes' goal-scoring heroics for Argentina on television in the 1978 World Cup, reports AP.

It's easy to understand why Swedish striker Martin Dahlin, whose father is a Venezuelan musician based in London, has a special affection for South American soccer.

"I don't remember my dad. I haven't seen him since I was four or five years old," says Dahlin, who is tied for third in the Cup scoring race with four goals.

"But I do remember Kempes' six goals when Argentina became world champions. When I saw how glad they were when they scored, I was very impressed. I told myself then that this was what I wanted to do, score a goal in the World Cup."

The first of his two diving headers against Russia in a 3-1 win at Pontiac's Silverdome was one of the finest of the first round. Dahlin dove toward the near-post and flicked the ball to the far-post to beat goalkeeper Dmitry Kharin.

"My dream is to become a world champion," Dahlin says. "But I know it's very difficult. We need a lot of luck to become world champions."

Sweden reached the final as host of the 1958 tournament, but Pele's Brazil won 5-2 at Stockholm. In 1950, Sweden were third.

That Dahlin scored three of his four World Cup goals on headers was no surprise.

Dahlin, 26, has never played against Brazil. He didn't make the squad in the 1990 World Cup in Italy, when Sweden lost by identical 2-1 scores to Brazil, Scotland and Costa Rica.

"That was the worst year of my career, my confidence was at a very low ebb," recalls Dahlin, who couldn't even net a Malmö FF team then struggling to avoid relegation in the Swedish First Division.

He didn't score a single goal in the 1992 European Championship finals when host Sweden beat eventual champion Denmark 1-0 in round-robin play before losing a 3-2 heartbreaker to world champion Germany in the semis. But he set up two goals. The tournament's goal-scoring honours instead went to Tomas Brodin, Sweden's other striker and now a midfielder on the World Cup team.

Swedish coach Tommy Svensson considers the Europeans a turning point in Dahlin's career.

"He had a couple of good performances even if he didn't score," Svensson says. "It was the start of a new era for Martin. He has worked hard, matured as a human being and as a soccer player and has gained experience playing in Germany. When he started scoring goals, that increased his self-confidence, and that's very important for him."

### Hagi on verge of greatness

SAN FRANCISCO, July 9: If ever a player needed to showcase his talents on the World Cup stage it was Romania's Gheorghe Hagi, reports AFP.

The gifted Hagi saw the tournament as his last chance to get his stalled football career back on track.

And now, with Romania meeting Sweden in their first-ever World Cup quarter-final in San Francisco on Sunday, Hagi is being hailed as the player-of-the-tournament.

It is a dramatic turnabout for the former idol of deposed Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

Despite his touches of genius the 29-year-old has had problems trying to find a top flight European club where he can display his talent.

Going into the World Cup he had been marking time with Brescia in the backwaters of Italy's Second Division, but promoted into Serie A next season.

Hagi's performances have aroused the interest of some of Europe's wealthiest clubs, led by Johan Cruyff's Barcelona.

Before joining Romanian coach Mircea Lucescu at Brescia, Hagi had been in the big-time with Real Madrid, who had bought him for three and a half million dollars, but he never realised his potential.

"You have to risk a lot by bringing the ball from the centre of the field in attack," says Hagi.

"That's why sometimes the success cannot be the same in every game, but when I can do it's very nice."

With time ebbing away it was beginning to look as

though Hagi, in his 10th year in the national team, was destined to become one of the world's great wasted talents.

But right from Romania's opening group match against touted leading contender Colombia Hagi showed why when on form he is considered as one of the greatest players of his era.

Hagi scored one goal and

He also scored in a comprehensive 3-2 win, his 25th goal in 87 internationals.

Even Hagl was impressed by his performance.

"This has been the greatest game of my life," said Hagl, whose existing moment of football glory was in 1989 when he led Steaua Bucharest, the Romanian army side, to the final of the European Champions' Cup final.

Equally impressed with Hagi is Swedish coach Tommy Svensson, who has the task of finding a way to contain the skilful Romanian.

"He is a class above the rest of the team. He has great vision.

He can see things most players can't admitted Svensson after watching the Romanian victory over Argentina on video.

But if Hagl has a weakness it is his brittle temperament. Ill discipline has blighted his topsy-turvy career. Last April his federation president Sandu Mircea suspended him for two games for spitting at Northern Ireland opponent Phill Gray in a friendly in Belfast.

Hagi is now a man on a mission, determined to improve on Romania's World Cup performance in Italy when they went out to Ireland in a penalty shoot-out after reaching the last 16.

"This time we want the quarter-finals," he said before USA '94.

That has been completed, but Hagi is now eyeing the semi-finals.

"This is our chance. We haven't take it," he said Friday.

Romania's almost man is finally poised to become the man.



**GHEORGHE HAGI**

made the other two for striker Florin Raducioiu in a 3-1 win over the Colombians at the Pasadena Rose Bowl.

But it was his performance against the much-fancied Argentina in the second round that revealed to the world his genius.

Nothing exemplified that more than when he laid on a defence-splitting ball for Ilie Dumitrescu to put Romania back in front after Argentina had equalised.

### Awaiting annus mirabilis

PALO ALTO, California, July 9: Three dates matter to students of Swedish soccer — 1948, 1958 and 1974.

"Now Swedes are hoping that Tommy Svensson's current 1994 squad can go one better than all their predecessors and become world champions, reports Reuter.

In 1948 the fabled striking trio of Gunnar Gren, Gunnar Nordahl and Nils Liedholm — forever known as the Gre-No-Li trio helped Sweden win the Olympic gold medal in London.

In 1958 Sweden hosted the World Cup finals and finished as runners-up to Brazil and in 1974 a fine Swedish team reached the second round of the World Cup and were applauded for their efforts on returning home.

Ralf Edstrom, the powerfully built striker who scored four goals for Sweden in the 1974 World Cup, believes the present team are easily capable of becoming the best Sweden had ever produced.

"They no longer fear anyone," said Edstrom, who scored 15 goals in 40 internationals in the 1970s.

"The 1974 side were a good side too, but we were always happier being the underdogs. Today's team believes in itself, they are mentally stronger than we were and they play a good attacking style."

Edstrom also played in the 1978 World Cup in Argentina before a knee injury while he was at Monaco brought his career to a premature end at the age of 30 in 1983.

He played alongside Bjorn Nordqvist whose Swedish record of 115 caps is about to be equalled by goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli on Sunday.

"There is another record I hope goes too," he said. "My World Cup scoring record. I scored four times in the 1974 finals and Martin Dahlin has equalled that record. I am pleased my record is in jeopardy...I hope he beats it."

"Those players from 1958 are still very special to us," he said. "And I have met six or seven of them. They often come to watch us play and although none of them are out here you know they are watching back home. It would be great to achieve even more than they did, to go on and win the World Cup."

"People talk of '48, '58 and '74 in Sweden," said Edstrom, but 1992 was a very special year too.

### Stars of rutilant rivals

STANFORD, Calif. July 9: It's not just Sweden vs Romania, it's the Black Pearl against the Maradona of the Carpathians, reports AP.

Martin Dahlin and Gheorghe Hagl are two of the biggest stars in the World Cup. They are the key players on two of the most surprising teams in the tournament.

And it's on them that Sunday's World Cup quarter-final likely will be decided.

"We've waited all our lives for this opportunity," said Romanian coach Anghel Iordanescu. "Much of the outcome depends on how Hagl plays."

Dahlin, Sweden's marquee player, thinks highly of Hagl.

"He's a wonderful player," said Dahlin, who's tied for third in the scoring race with four goals, despite missing one game because of a suspension.

"He's one of the tournament's best players. We have to mark him close and not give him any room. We have to stop Hagl if we're going to win the game."

Hagl, who has scored three goals, including the eventual game-winner in a 3-2 second-round upset over 1990 finalist Argentina, isn't returning compliments.

"I can smell our victory in the air; it's a sweet smelling smell," Hagl said. "The Swedes are favourites on paper, but soccer is not played on paper. The match against Argentina proved we can beat any team in the world."

Dahlin, who became the first black star on the Swedish team three years ago, forms a formidable two-man attack alongside lanky Kennet Andersson, who has three goals.

Miodrag Belodedici, one of the best defenders at the World Cup, likely will mark Dahlin.

"It will be a war in the soccer field," Belodedici said of the duel. "I certainly won't give up. And I don't think he will, either."

"Many people say Argentina is a better team than Sweden," Belodedici said. "But with



**MARTIN DAHLIN**

The Swedes' strongest asset has always been a professional organisation and Svensson, who sent two men from his staff to scout the Romania-Argentina game, spent several hours watching video tapes from his opponents' previous World Cup games.

"Yesterday, the players watched a 30-minute tape selected from Romania's previous games," Svensson said. "We found some interesting patterns in their play which will be very useful for our tactical planning in defence and offence."

"Theoretically, I think we

Sweden having a similar European style as ours. I think we will have a difficult match."

"They will attack us from all sides, especially from the wings, which Argentina didn't do. That's why Sweden could be more dangerous than Argentina," Belodedici said.

Romania, who lost to Switzerland, will be the Swedes' toughest task so far in the tournament, coach Tommy Svensson says.

"We know that it's going to be a very, very difficult match," Svensson said. "It's do-or-die, but we think we're capable of winning the quarter-final."

have the picture clear. What remains is practical and that's what we're going to work on in the remaining workouts."

Romania is a team that scores on the counterattack and that's how it upset the Argentines.

"But with Sweden, it's not so easy to counterattack like it was against Argentina," said Florin Raducioiu, a forward with European Champions Cup winners AC Milan.

Raducioiu, who has two goals in the tournament, missed the Argentina game because of a suspension, but is expected to return to be starting front line on Sunday.

The four-back line was supposed to be the weak link on the Swedish team, but was the key in shutting down Brazil's fearsome duo of Romario and Bebeto in a first-round 1-1 draw. They had little trouble in the second round against Saudi Arabia, winning 3-1.

Sweden tied Romania 1-1 in an exhibition at Mission Viejo, Calif. in early June and "I think we earned some respect from them in that match," Svensson said. "We really played well in the second half and should have won considering the scoring chances we had."

"I'm impressed by the Romanians," said Svensson. "They showed a very strong defence against Argentina. And I think Hagl is the best player so far in the tournament."

The winner of the Sweden-Romania match will play the winner of the Netherlands-Brazil match in a semifinal on July 13 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif.

### PROBABLE TEAM

**ROMANIA:** Florin Prunea, Dan Petrescu, Daniel Prodan, Miodrag Belodedici, Gheorghe Popescu, Ioan Lupescu, Dorinel Munteanu, Gheorghe Hagl, Bogdan Steltescu, Florin Raducioiu, Ilie Dumitrescu.

**SWEDEN:** Thomas Ravelli, Roland Nilsson, Patrik Andersson, Pontus Kamark, Roger Ljung, Stefan Schwarz, Klas Ingesson, Jonas Thern, Thomas Brodin, Kennet Andersson, Martin Dahlin.

### Carrying can that's for Sadyrin

MOSCOW, July 9: Revelations of heavy drinking by Russian players during the World Cup have put further pressure on coach Pavel Sadyrin, whose appointment led to a boycott of the finals by a handful of key players, reports AFP.

Several players drank so much on the night of the 6-1 defeat of Cameroon last Tuesday — which kept alive slim Russian chances of reaching the second round — that they were incapable of training properly the following day.

Sadyrin reacted by expelling striker Sergei Yuran from the squad and imposing fines of 5,000 dollars on both Dmitry Radchenko and Sergei Gorlukovich.

In the event the Russians failed to qualify but the press here are pointing the finger at Sadyrin.

"How can the coach hold a party and allow the players wives to spend the night at the squad's hotel when the team can still qualify said one newspaper, Sevodnya.

"We can't go on like this. The team is worthless and the coach has no authority over the players. Victory over Cameroon was mainly due to their poor performance," said striker Vladimir Beschastnykh. Oleg Salenko scored a World Cup record of five goals in the win.

When the squad arrived in California from Moscow some players say teammates were already drunk.

Midfielder Valery Karpin also said that at a reception attended by the mayor of San Francisco several players could hardly stand up.

And when one of them tried to applaud he was incapable of bringing his hands together.

### Havelange is a realist

DALLAS, July 9: FIFA president Joao Havelange said Friday soccer will do all it can to keep competition fair and games exciting, but it's powerless to act against ill effects of society such as drugs and violence, reports AP.

Havelange said the shooting death of Colombian player Andres Escobar and the drug case of Argentina's Diego Maradona during the World Cup showed that life's tragedies often impose themselves on sports.

"FIFA is very sad about the events that occurred," Havelange said at a news conference. "We communicated that and, with Escobar's death, asked the Colombian government to do all it could to find why such a great soccer player could be killed."

"It is impossible for FIFA to take action that could prevent this kind of conduct. You can't expect FIFA to send troops to try to calm things down. If the United Nations is not able to stop something like the killings in Rwanda, how can FIFA intervene in such a situation?"

In the case of Maradona, kicked out of the World Cup last week after flunking a second doping test for the second time in three years, Havelange said soccer officials knew of the player's drug history, but remained powerless to prevent a recurrence.

"We in FIFA have done much work with Maradona on doping," Havelange said. "We followed him from Spain to Argentina. We were mindful of the problem and told the team to take note of the problem so, hopefully, it would not recur."

Escobar was gunned down outside a bar in Medellin, Colombia, a week ago. At least three people have been arrested in the slaying, which police say may have been ordered by drug lords or been revenge for an own-goal Escobar scored in a 2-1 loss to the United States that knocked Colombia out of the World Cup.

The killing came less than 48 hours after Maradona tested positive for using five banned stimulants and was expelled from the tournament by the Argentine Football Association. FIFA will investigate possible further sanctions against Maradona next month.

In 1991, Maradona tested positive for cocaine and was suspended by FIFA for 15 months.

The Maradona case has been "the only positive drug test" at the World Cup, where two players from each team are randomly selected for urinalysis after each match. FIFA said it had full faith in its anti-drug programme.

"FIFA has followed all the laws and rules," Havelange said. "The facts are pretty clear. Doctors in doping control did excellent work."

Havelange and other FIFA officials said they were pleased with the World Cup's first US appearance, especially with record attendance and more wide-open games.

"We are very happy that the United States is joining this international sport," Havelange said.

can FIFA intervene in such a situation?"

In the case of Maradona, kicked out of the World Cup last week after flunking a second doping test for the second time in three years, Havelange said soccer officials knew of the player's drug history, but remained powerless to prevent a recurrence.

"We in FIFA have done much work with Maradona on doping," Havelange said. "We followed him from Spain to Argentina. We were mindful of the problem and told the team to take note of the problem so, hopefully, it would not recur."

Escobar was gunned down outside a bar in Medellin, Colombia, a week ago. At least three people have been arrested in the slaying, which police say may have been ordered by drug lords or been revenge for an own-goal Escobar scored in a 2-1 loss to the United States that knocked Colombia out of the World Cup.

The killing came less than 48 hours after Maradona tested positive for using five banned stimulants and was expelled from the tournament by the Argentine Football Association. FIFA will investigate possible further sanctions against Maradona next month.

In 1991, Maradona tested positive for cocaine and was suspended by FIFA for 15 months.

The Maradona case has been "the only positive drug test" at the World Cup, where two players from each team are randomly selected for urinalysis after each match. FIFA said it had full faith in its anti-drug programme.

"FIFA has followed all the laws and rules," Havelange said. "The facts are pretty clear. Doctors in doping control did excellent work."

Havelange and other FIFA officials said they were pleased with the World Cup's first US appearance, especially with record attendance and more wide-open games.

"We are very happy that the United States is joining this international sport," Havelange said.

can FIFA intervene in such a situation?"

In the case of Maradona, kicked out of the World Cup last week after flunking a second doping test for the second time in three years, Havelange said soccer officials knew of the player's drug history, but remained powerless to prevent a recurrence.

"We in FIFA have done much work with Maradona on doping," Havelange said. "We followed him from Spain to Argentina. We were mindful of the problem and told the team to take note of the problem so, hopefully, it would not recur."

Escobar was gunned down outside a bar in Medellin, Colombia, a week ago. At least three people have been arrested in the slaying, which police say may have been ordered by drug lords or been revenge for an own-goal Escobar scored in a 2-1 loss to the United States that knocked Colombia out of the World Cup.

The killing came less than 48 hours after Maradona tested positive for using five banned stimulants and was expelled from the tournament by the Argentine Football Association. FIFA will investigate possible further sanctions against Maradona next month.

In 1991, Maradona tested positive for cocaine and was suspended by FIFA for 15 months.

The Maradona case has been "the only positive drug test" at the World Cup, where two players from each team are randomly selected for urinalysis after each match. FIFA said it had full faith in its anti-drug programme.

"FIFA has followed all the laws and rules," Havelange said. "The facts are pretty clear. Doctors in doping control did excellent work."

Havelange and other FIFA officials said they were pleased with the World Cup's first US appearance, especially with record attendance and more wide-open games.

"We are very happy that the United States is joining this international sport," Havelange said.



Joao Havelange, president of the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA), confers to a reporter at Dallas media centre during a press conference on July 8. — AFP photo

### Nigeria in no hurry

MANSFIELD, Massachusetts, July 9: Nigeria will take time to reflect on their disappointing exit from the World Cup before making any decisions on future plans, official said, reports Reuter.

"The African champions were beaten 2-1 by Italy in their second-round match at Foxboro on Tuesday after leading 1-0 with just two minutes left to play."

Officials and players were still absorbing the dramatic turnabout in fortune on Wednesday as they prepared to leave for home.

"It was a crushing blow," said sweepster Chidi Nwanu, who played in all four of Nigeria's games at USA '94.

"I suppose we now have to look forward to another try in France in 1998."

But sports officials said Nigeria would take their time before setting plans for the defence of their African Nations' Cup title in two years' time and the 1998 World Cup qualifying campaign.

"We will have to create a new team," said chief Sylvanus Akinwunmi, chairman of Nigeria's National Sports Commission and head of their World Cup delegation.

"Many of the present crop of players will be too old in four years' time. I think we have to start looking inward to find more talent in our domestic league."